

A number of rare animals are found in the area. Several clusters of the Federal and State Endangered red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) are known from the site, though it is not known if the birds are still breeding at the site. The State Special Concern and Federal Species of Concern southern hognose snake (*Heterodon simus*) is known from the vicinity, and the State Significantly Rare frosted elfin (*Callophrys irus*) butterfly uses the sandhills lupine (*Lupinus diffusus*) at the site for its host plant. The pinewoods darter (*Etheostoma mariae*) and the sandhills chub (*Semotilus lumbee*), both State Special Concern, have been found in Hills Creek.

PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT: The Sandhills Game Land portion, roughly 45% of the natural area, is in conservation ownership; a portion of this public land has additional protection as the Lumber River/Drowning Creek Flatwoods and Swamp Registered Natural Heritage Area. Most of the remaining land, on both sides of the road, is in a single private ownership. A second tract, to the west, is enrolled in the Safe Harbor Program. Conservation agencies should work with these landowners for additional protection, such as conservation easements, if acquisition is not a suitable option.

The natural area is being managed fairly well by private landowners, though the State-owned land is not as well managed by prescribed burns. A portion of the Game Land at the southern end of the site is a pine straw raking zone, and thus there are impacts to the herb layer. It is hoped that no additional lands at the site will be opened up to pine straw raking/harvest.

NATURAL COMMUNITIES: Wet Pine Flatwoods, Streamhead Pocosin, Pine/Scrub Oak Sandhill (Mixed Oak variant), Xeric Sandhill Scrub

RARE PLANTS: white wicky (*Kalmia cuneata*); Watch List – eastern prairie-clover (*Dalea pinnata*), Carolina asphodel (*Tofieldia glabra*)

RARE ANIMALS: frosted elfin (*Callophrys irus*), pinewoods darter (*Etheostoma mariae*), southern hognose snake (*Heterodon simus*), red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), sandhills chub (*Semotilus lumbee*); Watch List – eastern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*)

REFERENCES:

LeGrand, H. 2003. Site report: Hills Creek Road Sandhills. N.C. Natural Heritage Program, Office of Conservation and Community Affairs, DENR, Raleigh.